

A N

ANSWER

TO

Dr. STEBBING's

LETTER

On the SUBJECT of

HERESY.

In a LETTER to the Doctor.

By JAMES FOSTER.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White-Hart*,
in *Cheapside*, near *Mercers-Chapel*.

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On the Subject of

HERESY

Is a LETTER to DR.

By JAMES H. HENRY

LONDON

Printed for J. Noon, at the Bible Office,
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A
 L E T T E R
 T O
 Dr. STEBBING.

S I R,

I Once more *step forth to do justice to myself*: And by that, I apprehend, I shall likewise do *justice* to the Writers of the New Testament, and particularly to *St. Paul*, whom you appear, to me, to have misrepresented. Truth is, or *ought* to be, the only thing we aim at; which, as it is best recommended by good-nature and calm dispassionate reasoning, so it requires an open and frank defence, equally distant from *flattery* as from *insolence*: I intend therefore, in the whole of this address, to

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treat

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treat you with an honest freedom, but yet with *decency*. Let me only put you in mind of one thing, which is this, that if I shall chance to use some of your particular phrases for the sake of making an innocent experiment, how they will become *another* pen, and suit *both* sides of a question, you can have no just ground to complain; because if they displease in the *copy*, they cannot stand rightly in the *original*. For my self, and so far as concerns *my own* stile and manner of writing, I shall carefully avoid captiousness and petulance, *dictatorial* airs, and *academic* pertness and puerility.

You are pleas'd to begin in the *common* Strain of Controversy, and tell me, that my *Sermon upon HERESY* has given *great and just offence*. You ought not, Sir, to have said *just offence*, till you had shewn, that there were sufficient grounds for it:—'Tis a point still to be determined. But if it has unfortunately given *great offence*, tho' it was compos'd and publish'd with kinder and better views, so has your *Letter on heresy*; nay, which is *more, truth* itself, the most important and useful truth, has given as *great and frequent* offence, as ever error did. I should not have expected, therefore, that

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a Gentleman of your character would have condescended to use one of the most *trite* as well as the *lowest*, arts of a disputant; which can only be calculated to amuse the ignorant with unmeaning sounds, or to engage the *passions* of the reader, and thereby prejudice and blind his *judgment*.

However, lest any should be influenc'd by such groundless insinuations; lest any should imagine, that my notion of Heresy was intended to *undermine* the Established Church, and, on that account, must give *just offence* to every good Churchman; I shall produce a few passages, out of some of the greatest writers the church of *England* could ever boast of, in which the same sentiments are distinctly and fully express'd.

I begin with Mr. *Chillingworth*, who, in a letter to a friend of his, that was perverted to *Popery*, has this very strong and remarkable sentence: "If you think me an
" *Heretic*, and therefore to be avoided,
" you must prove me to be *αὐτοκατάκριτον*,
" *condemn'd by mine own judgment*, which I
" know I am not, and therefore think you
" cannot*." Again, "He that believes the
" Scripture *sincerely*, and endeavours to be-
" lieve

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* Letter to *Lewger*.

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" lieve it in the true sense, cannot possibly
 " be an *Heretic**."—Bishop Taylor, speaking
 of the error of those, who did heartily
 believe in Christ, and yet most violently re-
 tain Circumcision, expresses himself thus:
 " So long as it stood with Charity, and
 " without human ends, and secular interests,
 " so long it was either *innocent*, or con-
 " niv'd at; but when they grew covetous, and
 " for filthy lucre's sake taught the same doc-
 " trine, which others did in the simplicity
 " of their hearts, then they turn'd *Here-*
 " *tics*,——and Titus was commanded to
 " look to them, and to silence them.——
 " For *Heresy* is not an error of the under-
 " standing, but an error of the will.—If a
 " man's error be not *voluntary*, and part of
 " an *ill life*, then because he lives a good
 " life, he is a good man, and therefore no
 " *Heretic*: No man is an Heretic against
 " his will†."—Mr. Hales of Eaton says,
 that " Heresy is an act of the will, not of
 " reason, and is indeed a lye, not a mistake;
 " else, how could that known speech of St.
 " Austin go for true, *Errare possum, Hæ-*
 " *reticus esse nolo?* Indeed *Manichæism*, *Va-*
 " *lentinianism*,

* Preface to the Author of Charity maintain'd, § the last

† Liberty of Prophecyng, 8vo. p. 30, 38.

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“ *lentinianism, Marcionism, Mahometanism*
“ are truly and properly *Heresies*; For we
“ know that the Authors of them received
“ them not, but *minted* them themselves;
“ and so KNEW what they taught to be a
“ lye *.” — This great man having men-
tioned a passage from St. *Austin*, I shall add
another, containing exactly the same descrip-
tion of a Heretic as I have given in my Ser-
mon: *Hæreticus est, qui alicujus TEMPO-*
RALIS COMMODI, & maximè GLORIÆ,
PRINCIPATUSQUE sui gratiâ, falsas ac no-
vas opiniones vel gignit vel sequitur. Ille au-
tem, qui hujusmodi hominibus credit, homo
est imaginatione quadam veritatis, ac pieta-
tis illusus †.

I cite these passages, Sir, not as *authori-*
ties to determine the point in debate between
us; but to silence unreasonable clamour, and
remove those prejudices, which you, and such
writers as you are, industriously infuse into
the minds of the people, to discredit every
one that asserts and vindicates their liberties,
against oppressive claims and arbitrary im-
positions. And I can very contentedly bear
your *hardest censures*, for maintaining what

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* Tract concerning Schism.

† De Utilitate credendi, Cap. 1.

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I think to be the truth, in company with that *orthodox* Father St. *Austin*, the *scourge* of Heretics; and with the INCOMPARABLE Mr. *Chillingworth*, the EVER-MEMORABLE Mr. *Hales* of *Eaton*, and the PIOUS and JUDICIOUS Bp. *Taylor*, those bright ornaments of the *reform'd Religion*, and eminent pillars of *your own Church*.—All the Clergy of this character (and I would hope their number is not small) who defend the common cause of *Protestants*, and are the *glory* and *strength* of the Church of *England*, I highly honour and reverence; but the advocates for schemes of Church-power, unknown to Christianity, and to our Laws and Constitution, I shall always oppose; and would willingly flatter myself, that I can't, for this, suffer in the esteem of the real friends of *Religion* and *Liberty*.

You begin the argumentative part of your letter with some critical remarks, which are allow'd not to be very *material* with respect to the main controversy. But yet as you seem to triumph on having made these observations, and thereby shewn how easily you cou'd defeat such a rash and inconsiderate writer as I am; I must, in mine own defence,

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defence, examine what you have offer'd. Let me only put you in mind, Sir, that you ought to have been perfectly sure, before you used any expressions that look like boasting of a *victory*, that your remarks, on points not *material*, were just and unanswerable; otherwise all *arrogant* airs are very unbecoming, and you must have trifled, in a manner I care not to describe, with your readers time and patience.—— The case stands thus. I had said, that *Heresy*, generally, signifies no more than a SECT or PARTY in Religion; this you admit: But whereas I say likewise, that *Heresy*, in the New Testament, is most commonly used in an INDIFFERENT Sense, and but seldom in a BAD one; this you affirm to be a great *mistake* *. And in order to prove it so, you endeavour to shew, that in three of the Texts, in which I suppose the word to be used *indifferently*, it must have a *criminal* meaning. It appears to me, Sir, that you have been very unhappy in the choice of two of your examples at least; and I submit it to the public to judge between us.

The first passage you mention is 1 Cor. xi. 19. *For there must also be Heresies among you,*

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 6.

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you, that they who are approved may be made manifest. With respect to which, I would observe, that it is a just rule, in interpreting all writings whatever, not to understand words in a *bad* sense, without an evident necessity, which, it is agreed on all hands, have a *general indefinite* meaning. If an Author's reasoning may be fully explain'd without fixing a *bad* idea on such words, this is a demonstration that they may be taken *indifferently*; and if they may, they must: For to understand them in a *bad* sense, when there is no reason for it, and when the *indifferent* sense will do full as well, is building entirely upon presumption and fancy;—'tis mere arbitrary interpretation, and against all good rules of *criticism*. Upon this foundation, I attempted to give the meaning of St. Paul's words in the following paraphrase; viz. *that considering the various tempers of men, their different views, passions, prejudices, their selfishness, ambition, vanity, and the like; 'twas natural to expect that they would divide into parties about Religion, as well as about Politics, and the civil affairs of life: And that the providence of God wisely permitted this, for the trial of their integrity: that the real Friends of truth, persons of an honest,*

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honest inquisitive and ingenuous temper might be made manifest; and distinguish'd from the indolent, careless, and insincere. In this paraphrase the word *Party*, or *Sect*, is used in a *general* sense, not confin'd to good or bad parties, but including both without distinction; this you admit, Sir, to be the general signification of the term *Heresy*: and since understanding the word thus *generally* will compleatly answer the end, for which St. Paul says, *there must be Heresies*; I can't see the least shew of reason for restraining and limiting the meaning of it.—But now what have you offer'd in answer to this? Have you endeavour'd to shew that my interpretation of St. Paul's words cannot be the *true* one! or have you given another of your own, and proved that to be the *true* one? If you had attempted one of these at least, your remarks wou'd have been much more *material*; but instead of this, you have done two things, which, as I humbly conceive, are very far from being *material*. 1st. You have roundly asserted, that I *have pressed the text into my service*, and that you *must needs demand it back again**; if that may pass for an argument. And 2^{ly}. you

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have

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 6.

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have put a case, that appears, at first sight, to be quite foreign from your purpose. Suppose, say you *, *the Apostle had said, (as he might have said) there must be Gluttony and Drunkenness among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest; wou'd it follow, that the words, Gluttony and Drunkenness, were not used to express something that was very bad?* By no means: And, I believe, scarce any man would argue so wildly. But this pretended Parallel is no more like the case St. Paul has represented, than darkness is to light: For in order to make such a similitude between the two instances, as will support and justify a parity of reasoning, *Gluttony and Drunkenness* must be sometimes used in an *indifferent* sense, as *Heresy* is; or *Heresy* must be always used in a *bad* sense, as *Gluttony and Drunkenness* are; both of which are false, by your own confession.

Another Text, which I cited to prove that *Heresy* has sometimes an *indifferent* meaning, is *Acts xxviii. 22.* *As to this Sect †, [or Heresy] we know that it is every where spoken against.* Upon which you ask me this question, *Do you not consider, that the*
speech

* Ibid. † This profession or doctrine of Christianity, Dr. Hammond in Loc.

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speech comes from the mouth of a Jew *?— as if this, of it self, was sufficient to prove, that the word is used in a *criminal ignominious* sense. *Absurdly again* †! For could no man, that was a *Jew*, speak of Christianity but with contempt and infamy?—If these had been prejudiced persecuting *Jews*, they might, perhaps, have used the word *Herefy* as a *term of reproach*; but as it is a circumstance strongly intimated in the history, that they were honest inquirers after truth, and open to conviction, since they desired to hear from St *Paul* his thoughts of Christianity, and what he had to offer in defence of it, and *appointed a day* for that purpose; 'tis quite unsuitable to their *character*, and the *candid* disposition they discover'd, to suppose they used the word in any other but an *indifferent* sense. Your account makes these *Jews* *prejudge* the cause, which, the history tells us, they only came to examine. According to the history, they were not determin'd whether to *reject* or *embrace* Christianity; they look'd upon it as a Religion that *might* be true, for any thing that, then, appear'd to them to the contrary; and yet you imagine, that they *condemn'd*

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 7.

† P. 7.

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it absolutely, and spake of it in disrespectful and *opprobrious* terms, when the very point they were solicitous to be resolv'd in was this, whether it was of *Divine* original.— Every one must see that this is extremely *improbable*.

I left *Acts* xxiv. 5. to be last consider'd; because, tho' the remarks you have made should not hold good, I will grant you have offer'd something *plausible*; something that a *hasty* writer might run away with, and a superficial inattentive reader may think decisive. In this passage St. *Paul* is stiled a *ring-leader of the Sect* [or *Herefy*] of the Nazarenes; and because *Tertullus*, the Roman Orator, said this, when he was accusing him before *Felix*, you contend, that the word *Herefy* must have a *criminal* reproachful meaning*.

If I should allow this, it would be nothing to the main purpose of our argument; because you expressly acknowledge the point I was endeavouring to prove, *viz.* That *Herefy*, in the general notion of it, signifies no more, than a *Sect*, or *Party*, indefinitely. But, Sir, a great deal may be said to shew, that *Tertullus*, in this place, might use the
word

* P. 7.

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word only in a general indefinite way, and that his pleading against St. *Paul* does, by no means, certainly infer the contrary. Suffer me to illustrate the matter by a parallel, taken from the use of the word *Party* in our own language; which answers pretty exactly to the general notion of *Seçta* among the *Romans*, and *αἵρεσις* among the *Greeks*.— Suppose, then, that, at the Trial of *Algeron Sidney*, one of the *Council*, employ'd against him, had charged him with being a *ringleader of the Republican Party*; wou'd any one have been so weak as to assert, that the word *Party* varied from its common signification, and was to be understood in a *bad* sense? The *whole phrase*, I allow, would have been intended reproachfully, but the word *party* might still retain its general and usual meaning. It would not have been the design of the speaker to blame *Sidney* for belonging to a party, but for being of the *REPUBLICAN* party; nor might it be the design of *Tertullus* to reproach St. *Paul* for adhering to a *Seçt*, but for being a *ringleader of the Seçt of the NAZARENES*, which was charged with *sedition*. So that they are the *epithets* and *characters*, made use of to distinguish the *Seçt* or *Party*, that in both cases

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cases convey all that is criminal and ignominious in the idea.—And when the Apostle says, in answer to the charge that was brought against him, *After the way, which they call Heresy *, so worship I the God of my fathers*; 'twill be hard to prove, that he meant any thing more than this, that he was very *improperly* represented as a Leader of a *Sect*, because he adhered to the old Religion; *believing all things that are written in the Law, and the Prophets*. The word *Sect*, even in the general notion of it, was of too confin'd and narrow a signification to be apply'd to his case; since, as he asserts in his defence, he was not accus'd for maintaining principles that were either *new*, or *singular*; but *common* principles contain'd in the *Mosaic and Prophetical writings*: *Let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the Council; except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day*. In the same strain his *Apologies* for himself generally run. Thus *Acts xxvi. 6, 7, 8.*—*I stand, and am judged,* [not

* — Sect, or peculiar way of profession, or religion, (see *Acts* 16. 5.) Dr. Hammond.

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[not for the *peculiarities* of a new profession, but] *for the hope of the promise made of God unto our FATHERS. Unto which promise, our twelve tribes instantly serving God, day and night, hope to come: for which hope sake, King Agrippa, I am accus'd of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?—* I continue unto this day—*saying none other things, than those which the PROPHETS, and MOSES, did say should come, (ver. 22.)* And again, *Chap. xxviii. 19.* we are told, that being brought to *Rome*, in consequence of his appeal to *Cæsar*, and having called the chief of the *Jews* together, he represented himself as a Sufferer for the *common cause* of their religion: *For the HOPE of ISRAEL, I am bound with this chain.* Whether, or no, these observations will be thought sufficient to establish the true sense of the passages we are considering, and to shew that you are mistaken in your interpretation of them, is, as I hinted before, not very *material*; because they are allow'd not to affect the grand point in debate.—But if I was inclin'd to imitate your *Stile*, I could easily tell you, and with, at least, a specious appearance of truth; that you are, by much, too *concise* in
your

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your criticisms, and too *quick* and peremptory in your conclusions.

But in order to shew, that what I have said, about the *indifferent* use of the word *heresy* in the New Testament, will not support the description I have given of a *Heretic*, you have oblig'd the world with this *notable observation* * : That “ tho’ αἵρεσις, in “ the general notion of it, signifies a sect *indinitely*, yet αἵρετικὸς [a Heretic] is evermore “ pinn’d down to a *bad* sense, as every common ENGLISH reader knows.”---But what is it, Sir, that every common ENGLISH reader knows?—Does he know, without understanding any thing of GREEK, that the GREEK word αἵρετικὸς is evermore pinn’d down to a *bad* sense? or because he finds, that the word *Heretic* always carries with it a charge of error in our language, is he sure, that the word αἵρετικὸς must always have a *bad* meaning in Greek writers? Does every common ENGLISH reader know, by the same rule, that because the word *Bishop*, among us, signifies a *Diocesan* Bishop, therefore ἐπισκοπος can’t denote, in general, an *overseer*; as it is render’d *Acts* xx. 28. by our own translators? or because the word *church*

* Dr. Stebbing’s Letter, p. 8.

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church is evermore pinn'd down to a good sense; can it be inferr'd from hence, that *ἐκκλησία* does not signify an *assembly* indefinitely*? Or finally, can a common *English* reader, or any reader, know, that because *αἵρετικός* is never used but *once* in the New Testament, and then 'tis in a *bad* sense, it could never have been used, on a proper occasion, in an *indifferent* sense; tho' *αἵρεσις*, from whence it is deriv'd, is confess'd to have an *indifferent* meaning; and the *indifferent* use of *αἵρεσιάρχης* † [an *Heresiarch*]

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* *Acts* xix. 39. ἐν τῇ ἐννομῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, in a *lawful assembly*.—*ver.* 32. ἦν γὰρ ἡ ἐκκλησία συγκεχυμένη, for the *assembly* was *confused*.—*ver.* 40. ἀπέλυσε τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, be *dismiss'd*, or *dissolv'd*, the *assembly*.—In the first of these passages, the same word, which, at other times, is rightly translated *church*, signifies a *civil assembly*; and in the two last, an *irregular* and *riotous assembly*.

† Vide *Simplic.* in præfat. ad prædicament. *Aristot.* & *Ammon* in *Schol.* ad *Categor.* (citat. a *Menag.* in *Not.* ad *Diog. Laert.* vol. 2. p. 10. *Segm.* 17.) & *Sext. Empiric.* p. 196. 724.—The reader may, perhaps, be pleas'd to see a short account of the use of the word *αἵρεσις* [*heresy*] in *Greek* writers. It is of a *middle nature*, and signifies the embracing any particular set of opinions, either good or bad. *Diogenes Laertius* says, the antient moralists were distinguish'd into ten *αἵρεσεις*, or *sects*. And a little after speaking of the *Pyrrhonists* he says, some allow them to be *αἵρεσις*, a *heresy*, or *sect*, and others not, according to their different notion of that word. Which some defin'd to be—τὴν λόγῳ τινὶ κατὰ τὸ φαίνόμενον ἀκολουθεῖσαν, ἢ δοκῶσαν ἀκολουθεῖν—that which follows a certain *Scheme* according to the appearance of things, or which seems to follow it.—But others—πρόσκλησις ἐν δόγμασιν, ἀκολουθίαν ἔχουσα.—The embracing a set of decrees [or *doctrines*] consequent upon one another. (*Proem. Segm.* 20.) To which latter definition *Clement Alexandrinus* adds, —and tending to happiness of life (περὶ

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a word of a much stronger sense than αἵρε-
τικός [a Heretic] frequently occurs in Greek
Authors?—Where, I ask, do you find this
CONSEQUENCE?—I challenge the best Logi-
cian upon earth to draw such a conclusion from
such premises *.

I must attend you, Sir, in one minute
observation more. You tell me (p. 11.) that
I begin very unfortunately; and then throw
away a great deal of pointed *smartness* on a
mistake of your own, for two or three pages
together. My words are these, *a Heretic*
is turn'd aside from the true faith, he enter-
tains wrong sentiments of Christianity. Upon
this you, a grave Doctor of Divinity, have
been pleas'd to *step forth*, and say—*How,*
Sir, is a heretic one, that espouses a false
Doctrine, knowing it to be such; and is he
one too, who is turn'd aside from the true faith,
and

τὸ ἐν Ζῆν συντελέσαι. Strom. L. viii.——And thus Cicero
uses the word *hæresis* in speaking of *Cato*, when he says,
(Paradox. 1.)—In ea est hæresi, quæ nullum sequitur florem
orationis——meaning the sect or *heresy* of the *Stoicks*.

The word αἵρετικός is seldom to be met with, except in
ecclesiastical writers. But *Suidas*, applying it to Philosophers,
uses it in the same *indifferent* sense with αἵρεσις. For de-
scribing the *Pyrrhonists* (in voce Πυρρῶνισται) he calls them
αἵρετικοί [Heretics]——who, embracing the opinions of
Pyrrho, were so called from their master.——In the New
Testament this word is used but once, and that in an *ill*
sense; but if there had been any occasion for introducing it
thus, no good reason can be assign'd, why it might not have
been us'd (as it is by *Suidas*) in an *indifferent* sense.

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 10.

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and entertains wrong sentiments of Christianity? You say that nobody is a Heretic in St. Paul's sense, but he who knowingly espouses a false doctrine. And is it possible then to be true, that he should be a heretic who entertains wrong sentiments? You tell us yourself, it cannot be—If I have told you, Sir, that it cannot be, upon what principles of justice or candour, upon what grounds of probability, or by what rule of interpretation, could you imagine what you have play'd with, and endeavour'd to expose, to be my real meaning! The expression you have carp'd at, I allow to be inaccurate; but this I insist upon, that the sense of it could hardly have been mistaken, if there had been a design to understand my meaning, and not an inclination to misrepresent it: For in a short discourse, wrote on purpose to prove This point, which is kept in view throughout the whole of it, viz. That a Heretic is one who espouses a false doctrine, knowing it to be such, and does not believe the principles he maintains and propagates; 'tis scarce possible that I should INTEND to say, that he really believes the sentiments he professes; or, consequently, that entertaining wrong sentiments of Christianity

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should have any other sense in the mind of the *Writer* but this, *maintaining Doctrines* contrary to Christianity. And you, Sir, will find it more difficult to excuse yourself for cavilling at a phrase, the true intent of which is obvious to all;—I say you, who have given a specimen of your Ingenuity in finding out *indirect* and *remote* senses (they are your own Epithets) for an Author, in the instance of *αυτοκατάκριτος*. However, was I inclin'd *obstinately* to defend every thing I have advanced, I might say, that by *Sentiments*, or *Notions*, may be understood *Principles*;—by false *Sentiments* of Christianity; false *Notions*; or *Principles*, relating to Christianity;—and that, without departing entirely from the *known* use of words, a man may be said to *entertain*, or *give entertainment to*, *Notions* which he does not *believe*, to promote some sinister views.—However, I allow an *Inaccuracy*.—

I shall make no farther remarks on the *triumphs* you have rais'd, on so weak and slender a foundation: They are below the Dignity of *reasoning*, and ill suit the importance of a *serious* Argument. Only, Sir, you must now see, that the *Confusion* and *Self-contradiction* from which you so charitably

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tably offer to *release* me, is entirely a fiction and creature of your own; and you ought both to see, and *acknowledge*, that you have perverted my words to such a meaning; as in a *fair* Construction, and considering the **AVOWED** design of my *whole* discourse on *Heresy*, they are not capable of.—— But you are too hasty to weigh things with coolness*.

You have detain'd me too long, Sir, on points of little moment, which having now dispatch'd, I proceed to defend my notion of *Heresy*, and shew the *scriptural* foundation on which it stands. It is chiefly built on these words of St. *Paul* (Tit. iii. 10, 11.) *A man that is a Heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: knowing; that he is such as is subverted, and sinneth, being condemn'd of himself.*——As the Heretic's Character is here describ'd, it consists of three branches, 1st. He is subverted, or *turned aside from the true faith.* 2^{dly}. He sinneth; i. e. *maintains doctrines contrary to Christianity wilfully, or with an ill intention.* 3^{dly}. He is *Ἀποκατακρίτω*, one condemn'd by his own judgment; one who knowingly espouses a false doctrine; one who is insincere in his profession; and maintains and supports the interest of a faction——against the sense of his own mind,

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 26.

and

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and the dictates of his reason and conscience; —either from a principle of vanity, and to make himself Considerable as the Head and Leader of a Sect, or to advance his temporal Interest. Concerning the first of these, his being subverted, or *turned aside from the true faith*, there is no dispute between us. —

The two last branches I have attempted to prove *distinctly*, following the order my text prescribes, in which the Heretic's Character rises *gradually*.

And 1st, that a Heretic errs *wilfully*, This, and 'This only, I have endeavour'd to prove from these words of St. Paul, *He sinneth*. And I still think the inference to be just and natural; because *Errors of the Understanding*, consider'd in themselves, are not criminal; and because *all Moral Evil depends on the Error and Obliquity of the Will*; and to affirm, that men may sin *without*, or *against* their wills, is to make Guilt and Misery *Necessary*, and represents the righteous and merciful Governour of the World as an Arbitrary Tyrant. And what, Sir, have you offer'd in answer to this reasoning? Have you either disprov'd That first principle of religion and moral government, That all virtue and vice is *Voluntary*? Or have you attempted

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tempted to shew, that a Heretic is not represented by St. Paul as a *Sinner*, and, consequently, as one *wilfully* Erroneous? Both these points are silently dropt; and something is *invented* for Me, and then confuted. For you would fain have the reader believe, that I design to prove, that a Heretic *maintains wrong opinions* knowing *them to be such*, because the Apostle says of Him, *that he sinneth*; In order to fix another absurdity upon me, *viz. that no man sinneth, but he that acts directly against conviction*. And all this is insinuated for want of considering, that I argu'd distinctly from every part of the Apostle's description; that I endeavour'd to establish my Notion of a Heretic by *degrees*, as the text suggested it; and not to deduce the *whole* of his Character from every single branch of his Character.—*Attend therefore a little**.—'Tis an *Essential* part of the Heretic's Character, that he errs *wilfully*; or, in other words, whoever does not err wilfully, cannot be a *Heretic*. Who then are the wilfully erroneous? who are the *wilful Corrupters and Opposers of the Christian religion*, whom St. Paul describes as *Sinners*?—They are *such, whose minds are perverted* [from an honest and impartial pursuit of truth]

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 9.

24 A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.

truth] by irregular dispositions and appetites, and who have resolv'd to sacrifice Truth, and Virtue, to the gratification of their sensual desires. Is it then necessary, in order to a man's being a *Sinner*, that he be resolv'd to sacrifice Truth and Virtue to the Gratification of his sensual desires?—No—But, however, This is justly specified as one branch of *sinful* Error, because it is the most malignant degree of *wilful* Error. I allow, therefore, (you will say) that I cannot, from this branch of the Heretic's Character, *He sinneth*, infer, that he acts *directly* against Conviction.---'Tis what I never intended to infer.—Can I then infer from hence, that *every man*, that errs wilfully, is a *Heretic*?—I never intended that neither.—For tho' it be *essential* to the Heretic's Character, that he err *wilfully*, it does not follow, that every one who errs wilfully is a *Heretic*: For to come up completely to this Character, he must be in the *highest Class* of the wilfully erroneous, such as act against their inward Light, and consequently *condemn themselves*. You will therefore, remember, Sir, for the future, that I design'd to prove from this part of *St. Paul's* description, only, *in general*, that the Heretic *errs wilfully*; and tho' it be

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 25

true, that he who errs *knowingly*, errs wilfully, and therefore I have justly rank'd him among the wilfully erroneous, who are represented by St. *Paul* as *Sinners*, it by no means follows, that I intended to represent This highest degree of Guilt as a *necessary requisite* to make any Error sinful; or that I am answerable for the Consequence you have drawn from it; namely, that No man can be a Sinner unless he is the *Greatest* of Sinners, and *acts directly against conviction*. Suppose I should say, that *Blasphemy* is speaking disrespectfully and reproachfully of God; and, therefore, that the persons describ'd in the New Testament as *Blasphemers* must be *Common Swearers* who treat his Name with contempt; such as make a *jest* of his Wisdom, Power, and Justice; and who *revile* his Providence, and deny his *Being*:—Would any *Sober* Reasoner insinuate, that according to This account, none could be Blasphemers but those who are *Atheists*? No: It would be universally understood, that I was only reckoning up the several *kinds* and *degrees* of Blasphemy; and the other case, which this is brought to illustrate, is exactly the same, as will be evident upon the least reflection.

26 *A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.*

I go on to argue from another topic, which is This; that the Crime of the Heretic, St. Paul speaks of, *was of such a nature, as required not Instruction, but Admonition*; from whence, I apprehend, it evidently follows, *that the fault lay in the Will, and not in the Understanding.* The design of my Argument is to shew, that to *admonish for mere Errors of the Understanding* is absurd in itself. To which, according to you, *it is a sufficient answer to say, that as St. Paul was now giving directions to a Bishop, it was natural for him to mention such particulars only, as specially concerned the office of a Bishop; such were Admonition and Rejection.* But if the Admonition be *absurd in itself*, will the *Character* of the *Admonisher* make it wise and rational? If it be absurd in a *Presbyter*, in *all mankind*, in the very *nature* of the thing, must it not also be absurd in a *Bishop*? This, which is a *Cardinal* point, and indeed the *only* point in question, You have not consider'd; and therefore might have answer'd my argument as fully by saying Nothing at all. And as you did not think it expedient even to give the Argument *at large*, and as I had stated it; I shall once more lay it before the Public

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 27

lic—— “ Every one knows, that the only
“ way to rectify a mistaken judgment is by
“ the use of reason and argument, by ex-
“ posing the false Grounds on which it is
“ form'd, removing prejudices, and repre-
“ senting matters in a clear and proper light;
“ and that to advise a man, in an *authorita-*
“ *tive* way, and without informing his un-
“ derstanding better, to alter his apprehen-
“ sion and judgment of things, and expect
“ to make a Convert of him merely by tell-
“ ing him he is in the wrong, be it with ever
“ so *solemn, imperious, and magisterial*, an
“ air, is to the last degree *absurd and ridicu-*
“ *lous*. But He may, very *rationally*, be ad-
“ monish'd or reprov'd, with relation to those
“ Errors, that depend entirely on the *Will* —
“ because, in every such case, he must *know*
“ himself to be out of the way, and has all
“ the necessary means of a reformation in his
“ own power.”

I proceed, at length, to consider the *Con-*
jecture, which you *offer'd above ten Years*
ago, and now republish (*with very little va-*
riation) concerning the word *αυτοκατακρι-*
τος, condemn'd of himself;—— against the
Current of antient and modern versions, and
the *general sense of the most judicious and*

28 A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.

learned Commentators. If This *Nostrum* appears to be well supported, the world may, perhaps, applaud your skill in criticism. And since you seem to be fond of it, and think it a Master-piece in the *Conjectural* way, I shall examine it candidly and thoroughly; and doubt not but to make it appear, that 'tis as *groundless* and *defective* as 'tis *singular*. I only beg leave to premise these two Observations.

1st. That in the interpretation, which you have given of *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, you take it for granted, that your Notion of Heresy is *right*: For no man can *openly accuse* himself of Heresy, by *departing from the faith*, unless every one that *departs from the faith* be, in the scripture sense of the word, a Heretic. You will therefore, Sir, be pleas'd to remember, that if it shall appear hereafter, as I presume it will, that your account of heresy neither *is* nor *can be*, the *true one*; it must then be allow'd, that your Interpretation of *αὐτοκατάκριτος* neither *is*, nor *can be*, the *true one*. For which reason, if I might be permitted to offer my advice, I should think it expedient for you, in order to *do justice to the word of God* *, to prove clearly your Notion of heresy, and defend

* Dr. Stebbing's Letter.

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 29

it against all objections, before you attempt to revive this *Novel* Criticism: Else it may be thought that you build without a *foundation*; and are not so much concern'd to find out the *true sense* of Scripture, as to make it speak *your own* sense; and, by any methods of straining and torturing, suit it to a favourite *hypothesis*. The

2d. Thing I would remark is This, that if we would interpret the scriptures rationally, and so as to make them a plain intelligible rule, we ought not to depart from the *natural* and *obvious* signification of words and phrases, and understand them in *new* and *unusual* senses; unless either the *nature* of the thing, the *scope* of the particular Argument pursu'd, or the *known* Character and Sentiments of the Writer, evidently require it. So that if it can be shewn (and I think it is not disputed among the Learned) that *self-condemn'd*, and not *self-accus'd*, is the *natural* and *obvious* meaning of *αὐτοκατάκριτος*; and if it shall appear hereafter, that the difficulties urg'd against this interpretation are *fairly* remov'd; it must then be admitted to be the *right* interpretation; even tho' it be suppos'd, that there is another more *Uncommon* meaning, of which the word is capable.

But

30 *A* LETTER to *Dr.* Stebbing.

But I shall endeavour to prove, so far as we have yet any evidence produced, that this is not the case; and that the sense, you have fix'd on *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, is neither *probable*, nor *supportable*.

You allow, Sir, when you call other senses of the word *indirect*, or *more remote*, that *κατακρίειν* properly signifies to *condemn* or *pass sentence against a person*, as a Judge doth. And hence it follows, that *κατάκριτος* denotes *a condemn'd person*, one *against whom Sentence has been given*. Which word, tho' it be not found in the New Testament, yet the sense of it is evident from it's opposite *ἀκατάκριτος* *uncondemn'd*, which we meet with *Acts xvi. 37. They have beaten us openly uncondemn'd, ἀκατακρίτους*. These persons had been *ACCUS'D* before the Magistrates, and *WITNESSES* enough appear'd against them, as is plain from *ver. 19,—22.* but as they had not been heard in their own defence, nor any legal *sentence was pass'd upon them*, they are stiled *ἀκατακρίτοι*. Now when *αὐτός* is join'd with any other word, which thus compounded denotes an action, it always intimates that the person of whom that word is spoken, does *himself* perform the action, express'd by it. Thus *αὐτοδιδ-*

δακτος

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 31

δακτος is one who instructs himself, αὐτοκίνητος one who moves himself, αὐτοθάνατος one who kills himself; and so αὐτοκατάχειτος must signify *one condemn'd of himself, or who passes sentence against himself.*

But in order to avoid this sense of αὐτοκατάχειτος you affirm, *that those are frequently said κατακείναι, not only who do themselves, as judges, determine or pass sentence of condemnation upon any man, but those also who do indirectly or more remotely condemn a man, by being in some respect or other the Instrument, in virtue whereof condemnation is pronounc'd; that is (as it is presently after explain'd) by appearing as Witnesses against him, p. 20, 21.* And from hence it is urg'd, that αὐτοκατάχειτος may in this place rather signify SELF-ACCUS'D, than SELF-CONDEMN'D. But this sense of the word κατακείναι is so far from being frequent, that to me, none of the examples brought for that purpose appear in the least to prove, it is ever so us'd. In Hebrews xi. 7. where it is said, that Noab κατέκρινε τὸν κόσμον, our English version of these words, *condemn'd the world*, seems very right. His building an Ark, as a proof of his own belief of the warnings he gave those people of the approaching

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32 A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.

proaching Deluge, was a *virtual Condemnation* of their Impiety in not hearkening to him, and a pronouncing their punishment to be just. The expression is indeed *metaphorical*; but the similitude must, I think, be taken from the action of a *Judge*, and not of a *Witness*, whose business is to *determine* nothing, but only to relate matter of fact. And we have a very plain parallel instance of the use of the word *Condemn* amongst ourselves, which will make what is said of *Noah* easy and intelligible to every common Reader. When we say, that a good man, by the exemplary virtue and purity of his Life, *condemns* the Corruption and Wickedness of the world, we never mean that he *accuses* them, or appears as an *Evidence* against them, or is the *means and instrument of their being condemned by another*; but that he gives his *Judgment* against them, that they ought to be condemn'd, and declares by his conduct, that he *passes a sentence of condemnation* against them in his own mind.

Matthew xii. 41, 42. and Luke xi. 31, 32. may likewise, as I apprehend, be best explain'd in the same manner: For when it is said, *the Men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation* (ὅτι καὶ ἡ γενεὰ

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 33

καὶ αὐτὸν) and shall condemn it, the expression may be thus interpreted, as in the Instance of *Noah*, (preserving the allusion to the original and proper signification of the word ἀλαλεῖν) they shall pronounce your Condemnation to be just; or thus, they shall be your Judges, and will condemn you: For they repented at the preaching of *Jonas*, and therefore will doubtless give sentence against you, who are impenitent under much greater advantages. And there is a passage in both the Chapters, from whence the Texts concerning the *Ninevites* are taken, that plainly direct us to understand them thus: *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your JUDGES: They shall give judgment against you, and condemn you.* I am sensible of what some have observ'd, in the instance of the *Ninevites*, viz. that the word ἀναστήσονται shall stand up (as our Translation reads it) suits better with the Idea of a Witness than a Judge, who usually sits when he pronounces sentence. But this sense of the word is not necessary: It may signify no particular posture of body, but only to appear; as in *Acts xx. 30.* Also of yourselves shall men arise, ἀναστήσονται speaking perverse things.

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Or

34 *A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.*

Or it may rather perhaps be us'd in a passive sense, since the whole passage refers to the future judgment, as in *John xi. 24. I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day; ἀναστήσεται*, i. e. *he shall be raised again.* And This sense seems to be favour'd by the other instance of *the Queen of the South*, mention'd together with the *Ninevites* both by *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke.* The *Queen of the South shall rise up; ἐγερθήσεται*, shall be raised up.— So that, hitherto, nothing has been offer'd to countenance your *New* sense of the word *κατακρίνειν*.

Nor does *Rom. ii. 1.* appear more favourable to it, *Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself:* For you may observe, Sir, that the whole *process* is in the offender's own breast; 'tis there he *judgeth another*, and *passeth sentence upon himself*; so that he is properly *αὐτοκατάκριτος*. And, besides, 'tis hard to conceive, how he who *judgeth another*, and doth the *same things* for which he judgeth him, which is the case *St. Paul* has represented, can be any thing less than a *deliberate presumptuous* offender, who *knows* himself to be in the wrong.—*Luke xix. 22.* is still wider from your purpose. If it had been said, in the very terms in which you have

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 35

have represented it, that *the unthriftly servant* was ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ κρινόμενος, *condemn'd out of his own mouth*; it could have signified nothing else, but that he was *condemned* [by the Judge] *out of his own mouth*. This, indeed, would have *imply'd* that he had confessed himself a Criminal, or some way or other given Evidence against himself: But it can't be from hence inferr'd, that κρινόμενος must signify *accused*. However, I need add no more on This head, because you know, Sir, that the words stand thus in the text, *Out of thine own mouth will I* [thy Lord] *judge thee*, κρίνω σε. And I hope you can give some better reason why you did not cite the text *fairly* than this, that then every Reader must have seen it to be absolutely *impertinent*, since κρίνω is not spoken of the CRIMINAL, but of the JUDGE.

Upon the whole, it does not appear that, in any of the passages you have quoted, κατακρίνει varies from its proper signification, or is apply'd to any one but in the Character of a Judge. And therefore αὐτοκατάκριτος, so far as is yet prov'd, must still retain the sense of one *who condemns, and passes sentence against himself, by his own act*; and not of one, who, like an *accuser* or *witness* only,

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furnishes matter for the sentence of another. And if so, this Character must be given of a *Heretic*, as a reason why he should be rejected from Christian Communion; and not, as you allege, (p. 19.) *why the Bishop should forthwith proceed to admonition, without calling in that Evidence of the fact, which was usual in other cases.*

But whether your Interpretation be *right* or not, you *think it a very clear case, that mine is wrong*:—And for what reason?—Why only because, in your opinion, there are great difficulties attending it, which can't be resolv'd. But, Sir, if the only sense of *αὐτοκατάκριτος* be This, one condemn'd by his own Judgment, as I think I have fully shewn; St. Paul could use it in no other sense, if he wrote with a design to be *understood*. 'Tis therefore your business to find out some *different* signification, which the word is *fairly* capable of; and till you have done This, whatever objections there are, against taking it in its *natural* and *obvious* meaning, they must still remain.

I will put a case that may not, perhaps, be unlikely, and suppose that an *Infidel*, on a view of the controversy between us, should think *self-condemn'd* to be the only sense of

αὐτο-

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 37

αὐτοκατάκριτος; and perversely urge the Difficulties, you have started, against St. Paul's inspiration, and the reasonableness and pertinency of his advice to *Titus*; what answer would you make to him?—Would you tell him, that whether your Interpretation was right or not, it was a *very clear case* the word could not be used in the sense he contended for; because it was *absurd* and irrational?—Might he not justly reply, that you had no right to put meanings on words which they will not *bear*, on account of any imagin'd difficulties; that such a method of proceeding must render the Scriptures absolutely *unintelligible*, and make them an *arbitrary* rule, to be interpreted by *fancy*, not by reason; and that if you allow a *Mahometan*, whenever he is press'd by a difficulty, the same liberty of altering the *obvious* and *natural* signification of words and phrases, and either of coining *new* senses, or imagining some *bidden* and *mysterious* ones not yet discover'd, he may defend every part of the *Alcoran*, and effectually silence all opposition?—How you would come off, I know not; if the Arguments you have urg'd, against the *common* and *obvious*, and, so far as yet appears, *only*, signification of αὐτο-

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38 A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing.

κατάκριτον be just and conclusive.—But they are in my opinion of *little* weight.

The only material Objection you have offer'd is what follows, that *according to my Notion* [of heresy] *there could be no standing power* [of admonishing and rejecting Heretics] *even at the beginning*. You have not condescended, Sir, to support your Assertion by any *direct* and *positive* Evidence; but have only acted the part of a *Doubter*, and a *Querist*, and put it upon me to prove, that the Apostles ever exercised the Gift of *Discerning Spirits*, as That phrase is generally understood, or ever had *the knowledge of mens hearts*, [*i. e.* of their inward Sentiments and Intentions] *communicated to them by the Holy Ghost*. I shall endeavour to set this matter in its true Light; but would not be thought to intimate, that This is the *only* way of removing the Objection, tho' I fix'd upon it as what appear'd to me to be most universally convincing, and unexceptionable.

That there was, in the *Apostolic Age*, διακρισις πνευμάτων, or the gift of *discerning Spirits*, St. Paul expressly asserts; (1 Cor. xii. 10.)—That πνεῦμα [Spirit] signifies, in Scripture, the *intelligent* principle, which judges, deliberates, and chuses, is evident
from

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 39

from 1 Cor. ii. 11. 1 Thess. v. 23.— And that πνεῦμα and καρδιά denote *one and the same inward principle*, may be prov'd from many passages of Scripture; thus to be *meek in heart* is of the same import as to be of a *meek Spirit*, Mat. xi. 29. 1 Pet. iii. 4. and to *rejoice*, to be *troubled*, to *purpose*, in *heart*, or *spirit*, are used promiscuously:—From whence it follows, that διακρίσις πνευμάτων [discerning of Spirits] may signify exactly the same as διακρίσις καρδιῶν [discerning of hearts.] When St. John exhorts the Christians to whom he wrote, to *try the Spirits whether they were of God*, not only another word is used *, but a quite different thing seems to be intended; because the whole of that Trial might be performed by the help of their *natural* faculties; and, accordingly, a rule was prescrib'd, by which every man's Reason might judge and determine: Whereas the *discerning Spirits*, which St. Paul mentions, was a *supernatural* power, and is expressly rank'd among the *extraordinary Gifts* of the Holy Ghost.—What then can it so *probably* mean as *discerning the views and principles*, from which particular persons acted, and distinguishing the *inward impulses* of true

* δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα.

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true prophets, from those of deceivers, and false pretenders to the *Spirit* of Prophecy. And we can, I think, have no reasonable doubt, whether this be the true interpretation of the Phrase, if it shall appear from several very *probable* instances, that the Apostles actually exercised this power.—There is one Observation proper to be premised, before we consider the Cases themselves; and that is, that in arguing upon Historical Accounts of Facts, we must content our selves with the Informations which Historians, who have wrote of these Facts, have afforded us; and are not at liberty to *Invent* or *Imagine* Circumstances, for which there is no *apparent* foundation: For by this method we weaken ~~the~~ Credit of all History, and turn it into *Romance*.

The first Case, in which the Power of *discerning Spirits*, in the sense in which I have explain'd it, appears to have been exercised, is that of *Ananias*, and *Sapphira*. The Fraud, for which they were so remarkably punish'd, we may well imagine, from the nature of the thing itself, was *secretly* transacted;—it does not appear, that *St. Peter* either did, or could, receive any *information* about it; and therefore the
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A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 41

supposition is groundless and frivolous. If there had been nothing *extraordinary* in the manner of their Conviction, the Crime, with which they were charg'd, must have been prov'd by the testimony of *competent Witnesses* :—This is the *Christian* rule, allow'd and cited by your self.—But the History has not given us the least hint of *Accusers*, of *Evidence* produc'd and examin'd, or that the offenders were convicted in the usual form which was justly requir'd in cases of immorality : On the contrary, the Expressions made use of are strong the other way—*Why hath Satan filled thine HEART to lye to the Holy Ghost?*—*Why hast thou conceiv'd this thing in thine HEART?* (*Acts* v. 3, 4.)—And the Apostle's words to *Sapphira* afterwards (*ver.* 9.) are very remarkable ;—*How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* i. e. to try, whether *the Spirit of the Lord*, [in us,] could detect and punish your fraud and hypocrisy.—'Tis most natural to believe, that *St. Paul* likewise exercis'd this gift of *discerning Spirits*, in the case of *Elymas* the Sorcerer, (*Acts* xiii. 9, 10.) because what he says of him relates chiefly to the inward *Subtilty, Deceit, and Malice* of his *Heart*, and

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the *Principles* and *Motives* by which he was influenc'd; which were as difficult to be known as the *Self-Condemnation* of a Heretic, without an immediate divine revelation.—*Act* xiv. 9. is rather stronger, and more *direct* to the point: For there is not the most distant intimation in the History, that the impotent man at *Lystra* gave any *outward* discoveries, or expressions, of his faith; but 'tis only said, that St. *Paul* stedfastly beheld him, and perceiv'd that he had faith to be healed.—So we are told (2 *Kings* viii. 11.) that the Prophet *Elisha* settled his countenance stedfastly upon *Hazael*, when he discerned, by inspiration, the ambition, lurking baseness, and cruelty of his temper, which tended to the murder of his Prince, and the desolation of *Israel*. All that you say, to *Acts* v. 3. and *Chap.* xiv. 9. is, that *those texts will bear other interpretations*. But the question is not, whether by art and labour they may not be *strain'd* to other senses, but whether these senses are equally *pertinent* and *probable*. When you think fit to produce your *other interpretations*, they shall be fairly and impartially considered.

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 43

I have said in my Sermon to this effect, that as **DISCERNING OF SPIRITS** *was one of those gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were communicated in the first age of Christianity; Titus particularly, to whom St. Paul directs his advice about Heretics, can't be suppos'd, considering his Character and Office, to have been without this Gift.* Upon which you ask me (p. 25.) *What was Titus's character and office?* and then answer your own Question very *briefly* and decisively—*A Bishop.* To which you subjoin another Query, *Can you shew, or is it reasonable to be supposed, That every Bishop of the Church at that time, had that gift?* I know not, Sir, why the *Bishops of the Church* are brought into this Controversy — *Titus* had a *higher* character, and was employ'd in more *honourable* offices, than every *Scripture-Bishop* at least could pretend to. I shall not therefore enquire, whether it be likely, or unlikely, that every primitive Christian Bishop was endued with the Gift of *discerning Spirits*. But 'tis easy to shew, from the Writings of the New Testament, what will fully answer all the purposes of my Argument: For that the *extraordinary Gifts* of the Holy Ghost in **GENERAL** (and if so, why not that of discerning

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cerning Spirits?) I say, that the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, in general, were common in the Churches of the *Apostolic* Age, is prov'd beyond dispute by the following passages. *Acts* v. 32. Chap. x. 44—48. Chap. xix. 1—8. *1 Cor.* i. 5—8. Chap. xii. 27, 28, 31. Chap. xiv. 1, 12, 13, 18, 23, 24. Texts of the same import occur in most of *St. Paul's* Epistles. And this great Event was plainly foretold by the Prophet *Joel*, whose words are *thus* applied by *St. Peter*, *Acts* ii. 16. From all which it may be infer'd, with as great probability as a thing of this kind will admit of, that *Titus*, who can with no colour of reason be denied the extraordinary assistances, that were *common* in the Churches——that *Titus*, who was a person of much greater *distinction* than a common *Elder*, *Overseer* *, or Bishop of a particular Church ;——that *Titus*, who was a companion of *St. Paul* in his travels for propagating the Gospel †, and employ'd in other most important services; it may, I say, be inferr'd with the highest probability, that one so eminent, with respect to his *character* and

* The *Πρεσβύτεροι* [Presbyters or Elders] and the *Ἐπίσκοποι* [Bishops or Overseers] of the Church of *Ephesus*, were the same Persons. *Acts* xx. 17. compared with *ver.* 28. See *Whitby* on *ver.* 17. † *Gal.* ii. 1, 2.

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and offices, was endued and furnish'd with miraculous Gifts in a *peculiar* degree, and with the Gift of *discerning Spirits* in particular.

Thus, Sir, I have fully answer'd the main difficulty, *viz.* that according to my account of Heresy, Heretics *could not be known*, nor consequently *rejected* even at the beginning; by proposing *one* way, founded on great probabilities, in which they *might be known*. This alone would be sufficient, if there were no *other*;— but this is what I have not asserted.

You tell us (p. 25.) that you was *once of opinion*, that *the Apostles* had the power of discerning spirits; or *the knowledge of men's hearts communicated to them by the Holy Ghost*: But you seem now to doubt of it; and for the following reasons, to which a very *short* answer will suffice.—*The Apostles*, you say, *speak of the knowledge of men's hearts, as the sole prerogative of God*.—And what does this prove? Does it follow, that because *God alone* knows the hearts of men *originally* and *necessarily*, he could never, upon any occasion, *communicate* that knowledge to others? By the same reasoning it must follow, that because *St. Paul* asserts that *God only hath immortality*,

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immortality, (1 Tim. vi. 16.) therefore angels and the souls of men are not immortal.
 —But you say farther, *It is not worth while to dispute this point in general. Sure I am, it was no standing gift.* *Answ.* You can have no reason to think that it did not continue in the Church, as long as the gifts of the Holy Ghost continued. And if by its not being a *standing* gift you mean, that the Apostles, &c. had it not always, and upon all occasions; this, I conceive, will be but little to your purpose; because if they were enabled to exercise it on *special exigencies*, when the good of the Church more particularly requir'd it, I may justly suppose that they were assisted by it in *detecting* and *exposing* Heretics, who never were, or *could be*, so dangerous, as in the *infant* and *unsettled* state of the Church.—But *why would it not have been as properly exercised in admitting men into the Church, as in casting them out?* *Answ.* You don't know, Sir, but it was thus exercised: For, because we have no particular account of a thing, will you therefore conclude it never happen'd? It can't well be imagin'd, that a gift of such extraordinary *Eminence* and *Use* was confin'd to three or four instances; and yet these are all

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all we have upon record. And if a *distinct* account of it might be omitted in any *one* case, why not in *another*?—Or because we do not find that an extraordinary gift was exercised in some particular instances, in which our *ignorance* or *presumption* leads us to think it ought to have been exercised, are we at liberty to suppose, against *probable* historical Evidence, that it was never exercised? To what you suggest about the *Apostles not having* this gift *when Matthias was chosen to the Apostleship*, and your urging this as a presumption that they had it not afterwards, 'tis scarce worth while to give any reply. You publish'd the same thing in your *Polemical Tracts*, and have had some years in which to correct a mistake that is obvious to all. And yet you *persist* in it: When every common reader, who is acquainted with the History of the New Testament, can tell you, that the Apostles could not have the Gift of *discerning Spirits*, when *Matthias* was chosen to the Apostleship; because *the Holy Ghost was not then given*. They were then waiting in Jerusalem, *for the promise of the Father*, and expecting to be *endued with power from on high*.—If you shall ask me, *why the Holy Ghost was not given sooner?* or
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why this extraordinary gift was not communicated some other way?——I shall think such questions neither deserve nor need an Answer.

Thus you see, Sir, that I have fully defended *St. Paul* with respect to the direction he gave to *Titus*, and *him only*, concerning Heretics; and have made him speak an intelligible and consistent Sense. The rule prescrib'd will admit of this natural and easy paraphrase: *A man that is a Heretic, i.e. a factious Sectary, who maintains false doctrines against his conscience, [and him thou art capable of distinguishing from others, by means of thy supernatural discernment] after the first and second admonition [for an Error that is wilful, and which he has it in his own power to reform] reject.*——Thus it appears that *Titus* might determine who were Heretics with the greatest certainty.——And tho' it be my opinion that *now, when extraordinary illuminations and assistances are ceased, it is a point of great nicety to judge of Heresy*; and I have therefore ask'd, *what rule we have by which to conduct ourselves in Inquiries of this nature? and how we can certainly know, in MOST CASES at least, whether a man be a Heretic or not; it can by no means*
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be inferr'd from hence, that I think Here-
tics can NEVER be known.—There are cases
supposeable, in which I may conclude that
an offender is *self-condemn'd* with much
greater probability, than you can determine,
without being *infallible*, that he *errs from
the faith*. If (to use an instance St. Paul
has given) any man teaches the immorality
of theft, and yet is a thief himself; I have
very good reason to believe that he *knows* him-
self to be in the wrong, and acts *directly* a-
gainst the Sense of his own mind, either in
condemning theft, or *practising* theft.—And
some cases of *Heresy* may be equally noto-
rious. These hints shall suffice for the pre-
sent.—But when you have prov'd, that a
direction given to *Titus* must be extended to
all *Christian Bishops*; or shewn, by clear pas-
sages of Scripture, that the power of judg-
ing Heresy, in *every* supposeable case of He-
resy, is a standing power in *all ages* of the
Church; I promise to explain my self more
fully on this head: 'till that is done, 'tis quite
a *foreign* point, and tends only to amuse the
reader, and take off his attention from the
main question before him. The whole con-
troversy turns upon the meaning of *αὐτοκα-
τάκριτος*. If that word, according to all the

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rules of Grammar and Criticism, can signify, nothing less than *one condemn'd by his own mind*, of which I hope the reader is by this time convinced; this must be *St. Paul's* notion of a Heretic. And if it follows from hence, as you suppose, but I have never asserted, that Heretics cannot *now* be *known*, nor consequently *rejected*; and if, notwithstanding, the rejecting Heretics, tho' according to *St. Paul's* account of Heresy it is *impracticable*, be *now* a *useful act* of Church-Discipline, and *will be to the end of the world*; *i. e.* if things *ought* to be practicable, which, according to the rule of the New Testament, and in the sense of an inspir'd Writer, are *not* practicable:—Let Infidels draw the natural consequence from such premises;—*I will not.* If *Christianity* be attack'd on this topic, I shall think it my duty to defend it; but to say any thing more about it at present, is altogether *unseasonable*.

And now, Sir, if it appears upon the whole, that I have defended my own account of Heresy, the scheme, which you have advanced in opposition to it, must of course fall to the ground: For if the one be *true*, the other is necessarily *false*. But however, that I may not seem to decline an answer

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swer to any thing you have thought fit to propose; I shall make some brief remarks on what you have told the world is your notion of *Heresy*.

They, you say, who, to the ministers of Christ in the execution of their office, shall appear by the best use of their judgments under the direction of God's word to have departed from the faith (whether with Knowledge or against Knowledge; whether sincerely or insincerely) are to them Heretics, and must by them be treated as such. — The directions we have in Scripture concerning this matter are absolute, — founded upon the single consideration of their teaching other doctrines. And the Church having now no help to know what are other doctrines, but her own judgment directed by the Scriptures, MUST act according to her judgment. According to this account (you confess) it will follow, that a man may be a Heretic to one church, who is not a Heretic to another; and a Heretic to both, who is not a Heretic to God. (p. 28, 29.)

When you affirm, that *they who to the ministers of Christ shall appear to have departed from the faith, are to them Heretics*; I take it for granted, that you mean no more than this, that they are Heretics in

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their opinion; but not *universally* and *necessarily* such, in the *Scripture* notion of a Heretic: For if all are Heretics in the *Scripture* Sense, who are so in the *Church's* Sense; and yet, as you allow, many of these may not be Heretics to *God*; it will follow undeniably, that the *Scripture* notion of Heresy is different from *God's* notion of Heresy. This is a position so extravagant, and impious, as well as inconsistent with it self, that I will not charge you with it, unless you make it your own by a plain and explicit declaration. But then, Sir, you must give me leave to say, that if this be not your *meaning*, you are not talking, in these passages, of what is *really* and *properly* Heresy; but of a thing that *may not be* Heresy; that oftentimes *is not* Heresy; that *may be* and frequently *is* virtuous and commendable, and agreeable both to right reason, and the rules of Christianity. Be pleas'd to remember, that we are not debating about what is or may be Heresy in the *opinion* of the Church, but what is Heresy in *itself*; and therefore so far as you have intended only the former, you are quite wide of the Argument.— Who then is a Heretic according to the doctrine of the New Testament, and particularly of St. Paul?

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Paul?—You must be oblig'd to answer, that he is a Heretic *who departs from the faith, and teacheth other doctrines.* Upon which I would observe,

I. That this account of a Heretic has not the least foundation in Scripture. The texts you have alleged to support your notion of Heresy, and prove that the power of separating Heretics from Christian fellowship, has ever been a *standing* power in *all* churches; the texts, I say, on which you have rais'd your whole Fabric, say not a syllable, nor give the most distant hint of *Heresy* or *Heretics*. This the Reader will soon see, if he will give himself the trouble to examine them. The greatest part speak only of *immoralities*, and mention nothing at all about *departing from the faith*; and you might as well have produc'd 'em to prove that *infidelity*, or *adultery*, is Heresy, as to serve the purpose you intend by them. Such as *cause divisions*, such as *walk disorderly*, such as *obey not the Apostolic doctrine*, may be *avoided*, *noted*, and *withdrawn from*, and yet not be Heretics:—For are all but Heretics fit to be *received* into our houses?—or are none but Heretics to be *rejected* from Christian communion?—The only Methods, as I imagine,

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gine, by which you can prove the point you have in view, are these ; either by shewing that the word *αἰρετικός* [a Heretic] strictly and properly signifies *one that departs from the faith* ; or by producing some passage, or passages, out of the New Testament, in which departing from the faith is declar'd to be *Heresy* ; or else, by proving this to be a plain and necessary consequence from other texts, in which *Heretics* are *expressly* describ'd. Let me only add, that it will do you but little service to urge these words of St. Paul, *A Heretic is subverted* ; because departing from the faith may be an *Essential* part of his character, but not the *whole* of it ; or, in other words, it may be truly affirmed that a Heretic *departs from the faith*, but it does not follow from hence, that *all*, who depart from the faith, are *Heretics*.—You might as well argue thus: A Heretic is a *Sinner* ; therefore all *Sinners* are *Heretics*.

Thus it appears, Sir, that your account of Heresy is altogether *unscriptural*: I might therefore dismiss it, without any farther examination.—But I am not willing to drop it yet, and therefore observe,

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2. That departing from the faith is a phrase of an *indefinite* meaning, from which 'tis impossible to form a *certain determinate* and *uniform* idea of Heresy. For unless the *particular instances* of faith, to depart from which constitutes the *Sin* of Heresy, be clearly defin'd and distinctly enumerated, the phrase can have no *fix'd* meaning at all; but must signify only this, what *particular Churches*, or the *ministers*, or *governours* of particular Churches, *think* to be departing from the faith. Be pleas'd now, Sir, to attend, while I lay before you the natural consequences from this doctrine: They are these: 1st. That the Christian religion has given us a *general account* of Heresy, by which we can form *no notion* of the true precise nature of Heresy. For to say, that 'tis departing from the faith, unless we have a *clear* and *determinate* idea of what the phrase *departing from the faith* imports, is saying *nothing at all*.——

According to your account of Heresy,—it will follow 2^{dly}. That the Christian religion hath prescrib'd a *rule*, by which to frame a judgment of Heresy, that ultimately resolves itself into *fancy* and *conjecture*; not a rule that *explains* itself, but one, the sense
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of which is left to be determin'd by *wisdom*, or *folly*, as either of these happen to preside; by *enthusiasm* and *blind zeal*; by *ambition*, *selfishness*, and *craft*.—It will follow, 3^{dly}, that Christianity hath prescrib'd *a rule*, by which *truth* and *error*, the *best* and the *worst* of men, are equally expos'd to Church-censures and excommunications; *a rule*, by acting upon which, so *dark* and *undeterminate* as it is, even a wise man might have foreseen, and the eternal Source of wisdom could not but foresee, that the right of conscience would be often *violated*; an impartial study of the holy Scriptures be *discouraged*; integrity *insulted*, and *oppress'd*; and all but those, who believe as the CHURCH believes, be *branded* with marks of *infamy*. —It will follow, 4^{thly}, that the Gospel hath prescrib'd *a rule* fatal to its own cause and interest, and calculated not to promote the *edification*, but the *destruction* of the Church: For if *Heresy* be departing from the Faith; and if both *Church-Governours*, and *private Christians*, in every nation, acted as they *ought* to act, and separated from Christian fellowship all who *appear'd to them* to have departed from the faith; and if the

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Governours of the *same church* acted likewise as they *ought* to act, and renounced communion with each other, as often as they espoused *opposite principles* in points which they *imagin'd* to be of *importance*; there could no longer be any remains of *peace* and *harmony* amongst Christians, but they must be always reviling and *excommunicating* each other. And as the result of all that has been said—from your notion of Heresy it will follow, 5^{thly}, that the Christian religion hath prescrib'd *a rule*, which can have no other *natural* and *certain* tendency, besides introducing endless *discord* and *confusion*, and subjecting the faith and consciences of Christians to an ecclesiastical *tyranny* and *inquisition*.

Again, according to St. Paul, heresy is a *work of the flesh*: If therefore your notion of Heresy be right, departing from the faith, *whether with knowledge, or against knowledge, whether sincerely, or insincerely*, must be a *work of the flesh*, that cuts off all hope of Salvation. Thus it *must be*, if St. Paul's account of Heresy, and *your* account of Heresy, are not two very different things; and yet, I think, I have found a plain instance, in which it *cannot be*.—If there may be

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such a thing as an *invincible* prejudice ; or, which comes to much the same in a *moral* account, such a prejudice, as 'tis not reasonable to expect, considering all circumstances, that the *best* of men will entirely get rid of ; and if there may be a case, and that of *importance* too, in which a man, from the force of *such a prejudice*, may think it his *duty* to adhere to a sect professing erroneous opinions, or opinions in themselves contrary to the *Apostolic* doctrine ; (and this must be allow'd, unless he has it in his power to judge *infallibly* right with respect to every doctrine of *importance*) it is a necessary consequence, that such an instance of departing from the faith *cannot* be heresy, nor your definition of heresy *just* and *adequate* ; unless virtue, and honesty, and a strict regard to the dictates of conscience, may, merely for the sake of *invincible error*, be rank'd with *adultery*, *murder*, and other capital vices, to which *damnation* is threatned.—You are pleas'd indeed to ask me, Sir, where I learn *that no heretic can be saved* ? — And I own I was much surpriz'd at it, and could not guess *where*, or *how*, you had pick'd up your notion of heresy ; when I saw you was *unacquainted* with the following passage,
in

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in which St. Paul has given as *direct* and *full* an answer to your question, as if it had been put to himself.—Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication,——HERESIES, envyings, murders——they who do such things SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (Gal. v. 20, 21.)——But (say you p. 33.) Take my notion of *Heresy*, viz. that a *Heretic* may be sincere, and you cannot, upon your own notion of sincerity, have it from scripture, that no *Heretic* can be saved: i. e. jumble truth and falsehood together, and see what will come of it.—But, Sir, I am not reduc'd to such a strait, as to be forc'd to take what you are pleas'd to offer me. I know from the express testimony of an *inspir'd* Apostle, that no *Heretic* can be saved; and therefore am sufficiently warranted to reject your notion of *Heresy* as *unscriptural*. And as the *Minor* of your Syllogism, in which you have attempted to put an *argument* of mine *into form*, and to which I refer the reader*, is now not *assumed*, but unexceptionably supported; the point I intended to prove stands clear of the *only* objection you have made to it; and you ought to acknow-

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* Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 33.

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ledge with me, unless you have any New and Stronger Objections to urge, *that no honest man can possibly be a Heretic.*

I have hitherto argued only in a *general* way; but I might perhaps have more to say, if I thoroughly understood your scheme, which seems to require a more particular illustration. When you say that he is a Heretic that departs from the faith, what must we understand by *the Faith*?——Doth it include EVERY doctrine of the Christian Revelation,—— or only FUNDAMENTAL Doctrines,——or FUNDAMENTAL and IMPORTANT doctrines? These are questions to which a direct answer may justly be requir'd, because 'till you are pleased to declare your self more fully, the Reader can have but an *indistinct* and *confus'd* idea of your notion of Heresy——and knows not the EXTENT of it. And I want to be inform'd particularly, let either *Calvinism* or *Arminianism* be the true faith with respect to the Decrees of God, the Efficacy of Grace, universal Redemption, &c. (I leave you at liberty to choose as you please; for I shall not insist on the articles of the Church of ENGLAND) I want, I say, to be inform'd, whichsoever of these be the

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true faith, why those who espouse and publicly maintain the *opposite false* doctrines, ought not to be *admonish'd, rejected, and anathematized* as Heretics, equally with *Soci-nians* or *Arians*.

You have said in one place, that a Heretic is *an offender against the order and discipline of the Church*, p. 18. upon which I am naturally led to enquire, whether you think this to be the meaning of St. Paul's words, when he saith *a Heretic sinneth*? If so, then I must ask you further, by what text of scripture you support this *new* definition of a *Sinner*? Do you really believe, as you seem to insinuate, (p. 18.) that the laws of the *Church* are equally binding upon every man as the law of his *Country*? or as the law of God? This you ought to maintain, or else how is he a sinner? Can any man be really a *Sinner* by offending against Church order and discipline, if he is not oblig'd to believe in all points as the *Church* believes, and to submit to her authority and discipline *implicitly*? And is this fit to be inculcated as the duty of Christians in a *Protestant Country*?— Does it not utterly subvert the right of *private Judgment*? ——— Can any Church, besides

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sides the pretended infallible Church of *Rome*, require such submission without the utmost inconsistency, and most evident contradiction to her public and avow'd principles? or was it possible for the first *Reformers*, upon this scheme, to justify themselves against the *POPISH* charge of *HERESY*.

There are many other difficulties, in your account of Heresy, that want to be clear'd; I must therefore go on to enquire, that I may get all the light and satisfaction I can--
A Heretic, you say, *is an offender against the order and discipline of the Church*——
Is he an *innocent* offender, or a *criminal* offender? This is a *serious* question with me, and much depends upon it; tho' it may seem *ludicrous*. To explain my meaning farther, is he an offender in the sight of God; or only condemn'd by the *By-Laws* and *Constitutions* of the Church? I suppose you will answer, that he is a *real Criminal*, because, other-wise, the word *Sin* is made a mere bugbear, as well as the words *Schism* and *Heresy*; and the Censures and Excommunications of the Church must be *unjust* and *arbitrary*.——Is he then a *voluntary* or an *involuntary* offender? I humbly apprehend, that here likewise you will think it most adviseable to answer, tha
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he is a *voluntary* offender; because no man can be a *criminal* either on account of actions or omissions, which it was not in his power to prevent; and the allowing this may, for ought I know, be very consistent with your notion of the Heretic's SINCERITY.

But if the Heretic be a *voluntary* offender, I fear, Sir, you are got into a Labyrinth; and embarras'd with much the same objections, as on my notion of Heresy you imagine to be insuperable: For how, I ask you, can the Ministers of Christ, or the Governours of the Church know, without knowing the heart, when an offence is *voluntary* or when *involuntary*? They may *presume* it to be voluntary, or solemnly determine that it must be so; but how can they know it? or if they are so well acquainted with the hearts of men, as to be able to determine that they offend *wilfully*, may they not, with a very little stretch of their powers, determine that they offend *knowingly*.

I have one case more to propose, which seems to be attended with considerable difficulty. I see that you have made ample provision for securing the powers and prerogatives of the ministers of the Church, and keeping the *Laitie* under strict discipline,

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pline, that they may not depart from the Church's faith; but if the *Pastors* and *Governours* of the Church are judg'd, by the body of the Christian people, to oppose publicly the *apostolic* doctrine, who are to *admonish* and *reject* them? For this you have made no *provision*; and on that account your notion of Heresy may be justly thought very defective. For since 'tis well known, by all who are acquainted with Church History, that the most flagrant Corruptions of Christianity, and particularly the abominable Idolatries and Superstitions of the *Romish* Church, have sprung from ambitious and designing *Ecclesiastics*; it can't be imagin'd, that the New Testament has no where guarded against the malignant Infection of *their heresies*; who have not only, in fact, been the most grievous *wolves* that ever worried and devoured the *flock of Christ*, but whose heresies must in the nature of things, considering their learning, authority, and influence, be of all others the most dangerous. It may be proper here just to take notice of an unaccountable mistake you are guilty of, (that I think could not arise from an over-diligent study of the Scriptures,) in saying that *admonition and rejection specially concern*
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the office of a Bishop; whereas in the very texts which you have quoted, that relate to Church Discipline, and the separating persons from Christian fellowship, both *admonition* and *rejection* are represented as the acts of the Church, or body of the Christian people. This is a most unfortunate Error, and indeed a fundamental Error, that overturns your whole scheme; but the proofs of what I have asserted, however that may be, are incontestable.—To whom was it recommended by St. Paul, to mark those who caused divisions, Rom. xvi. 17. but to the Brethren to whom the Epistle was directed, i. e. all the Christians in Rome; the Persons whom the churches of Christ saluted, and whose obedience and faith was come abroad to all men? ver. 16, 19. And who were exhorted to note and admonish that man, who obeyed not the apostolic doctrine, 2 Thess. xiv. 15. and to withdraw themselves from every brother that walked disorderly, ver. 6.—but the Brethren likewise, among whom St. Paul behav'd not himself disorderly; and whom he commanded not to be weary in well-doing? that is, the Church of the Thessalonians, or all the Christians in Thessalonica.—But if I should grant you, (tho' the contrary be

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most evident) that by the *Brethren* were meant the Ministers of the Church, this concession would be of very little advantage to you ; because as in neither of the passages referr'd to, the advice is directed to a single person, it must either be allow'd that there were more Bishops than one [at the same time] in the Churches of *Thessalonica*, *Rome*, and *Corinth*, as it is expressly said (Acts xx. 28.) that there were in the Church of *Ephesus* ; or if that be deny'd, you will be forc'd to admit another consequence more directly repugnant to what you have advanc'd, and that is, that *Presbyters* or *Elders* were always by *St. Paul* join'd with the *Bishop* for *admonishing* offenders, and *rejecting* them from Christian Communion ; and consequently that *admonition* and *rejection* did not, as you affirm, *specially concern the office of a Bishop*.

What *Christian* purposes your notion of Heresy may serve, I know not ; but this appears plainly enough, that it is directly calculated to establish the DOMINION and INDEPENDENCY of the Church. A brief review of the several parts of it will demonstrate this, and set it before the reader in a clear and strong light. — Every one (according to
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your account) is a heretic that departs from the faith;—what that faith is, to depart from which denominates a man a heretic, the *Governours* of particular Churches are left to determine themselves;—they are the ONLY OFFICERS invested with authority to *admonish* and *reject* Heretics.—In short, they are *supreme Judges* in cases of heresy, and, for any thing, Sir, that you have as yet thought fit to intimate, *accountable*, for their own departings from the faith, to none.

—And all those [be they KINGS, or PRINCES, or of whatever RANK or CHARACTER] *that shall appear to these ministers of Christ, to have departed from the faith*, must by them *be treated as HERETICS, i. e. be EXCOMMUNICATED*. And whenever the people have been brought to revere and stand in awe of this *hereticating* power, and to conceive a proper resentment against HERETICAL and EXCOMMUNICATED Princes; it has been found to be a matter of no great difficulty to establish an ABSOLUTE and INDEPENDENT authority in the Church, oppressive and fatal to Civil Government.

I must now beg leave to *recapitulate* and present to the reader, in one view, the points which you have either evaded, or left with-

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out attempting an answer, or taken for granted without the least shadow of proof; tho' they are essential points by which the whole question must be *decided*; and some of them are the chief supports of *my* notion of Heresy, others the foundation on which *your own* is rais'd, and the basis of all your reasonings. And (1st) whereas I have argued, that when St. Paul says a *Heretic sinneth*, he must mean that his error is *voluntary*, and springs either from *corrupt principles*, or an *ill intention*, because sin, in the very nature of it, implies some fault in the *will*; and errors of the understanding, *consider'd in themselves*, are not criminal:—To *this* you have given no reply.—Again, whereas I have urg'd, that St. Paul's advice to *Titus*, not to *instruct* but *admonish* a Heretic, must necessarily suppose that he is a *wilful* offender, who has it in his own power to reform his errors, and that admonition in cases of mere *intellectual* error is *absurd* and *ridiculous*—*This* you have entirely evaded:—and whereas I have produc'd the words of the same Apostle, in which he expressly declares, that Heresy is *the work of the flesh*—Upon *this*, likewise, you have not thought fit to explain your self.

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Let us turn now to *your own* side of the question, and there we shall find the same notorious and capital *defects*.—You have not prov'd, that an exhortation given to *Titus*, in a Letter directed to him only, *equally* concerns all the Ministers of Christ, or all Church-Governours.—You have not prov'd, that the power of judging in *all* cases of Heresy is a *standing* power, which Christ intended and ordain'd, or the Apostles directed, should be exercis'd in *every age* of the Church;—You have not prov'd, that he is a Heretic in the sense of Scripture, *who departs from the faith*, whether *with* knowledge or *against* knowledge, whether *sincerely* or *insincerely*; tho' 'tis upon this principle, that you have advanc'd, at best a *remote* and *unusual*, but, I think, I have shewn it to be a *strain'd* and *unnatural*, interpretation of *αὐτοκατάκριτος* or *self-condemned*; against the *literal* and *obvious* sense of it.—The reader will easily recollect all the instances I have mention'd; and will, doubtless, think, upon considering this short sketch of your *omissions* and *defects* in points of *principal* moment, that you must have the trouble, once more, of *resuming the debate as it were de novo*, before you can confute

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fute my account of Heresy; or establish your own.

In the conclusion of your Letter you have given me three cautions, and the last is this: *Let me not be charg'd with being for persecution.*——I intend as from my self, Sir, to charge you with nothing of this kind. Your notions about Church power, and the manner in which Heretics, or all who depart from the public faith, are to be treated by the church, are *rigorous*, and *severe*; but whether they are *oppressive*, or, in any degree, *persecuting* principles, I leave the world to judge. I do not charge you with being *at present* for persecution; nor shall I charge you with having *ever* been for persecution.——Only remember, that the CHURCH may persecute as well as the CIVIL MAGISTRATE:——And let the following very *remarkable* passages in your *Polemical Tracts* determine and point out your character——

“ * With regard to PENAL LAWS my opi-
“ nion is, that all Laws of this sort which
“ inflict either death, or torture, or banish-
“ ment, or imprisonment, ought in this
“ case to be laid aside: But then as to *pe-*
“ *cuniary Mulets*, I do not think that they
“ ought

* Polemical Tracts, Essay concerning Civil Government, p. 84, 85, 93.

A LETTER to Dr. Stebbing. 71

“ ought wholly and absolutely to be dis-
“ carded. Under this head then I lay down
“ the following position, viz. that such pe-
“ cuniary *Mulcts* as will be both the *trial*
“ and the *indulgence* of the *sincerity* of men,
“ i. e. such as will prevail upon no serious
“ and sober person to *join* in the *National*
“ way of worship *against* his *Conscience*; and
“ at the same time will, in a greater degree,
“ or in a less, be sufficient to *hinder* those
“ from *separating*, whom *no real scruple* of
“ *Conscience* *obliges* so to do; may *lawfully*
“ be imposed by the *Civil Magistrate*.——

“ Let us suppose a Law made to this or
“ some such effect, that every person who
“ does not think fit to conform to the *Na-*
“ *tional Religion*, should be oblig'd to enter
“ his name in some *public register*; and
“ that so many *Pounds* as he is rated to the
“ King, so many *sixpences* (or any other
Sum you like better) “ he should pay yearly
“ as a *tribute for his liberty*.——A man has
“ a mind, we'll say, to leave his *parish*
“ *Church*, and go to a *conventicle*. The
“ law allows it him, paying only such a
“ *Composition for his Liberty*.——This is
“ what I have to offer to justify the Law-
“ fulness of PECUNIARY MULCTS. If any,

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“ setting these aside, had rather stop at *negative discouragements*; I have only this
“ to say, that *PECUNIARY MULCTS* have
“ a more *General Influence*; and, (suppo-
“ sing them *proportion'd as they ought to be*)
“ will be attended with *no worse consequences*.”

If the reader shall think, that by recommending the *Mahometan* maxim, of raising contributions on all that dissent from the establish'd religion, you have given full proof *against yourself*, that you *once* espoused *persecuting* principles; he will be apt to entertain, notwithstanding all your *cautions*, the same *bad* opinion of the principles you *now* hold; unless these justly *obnoxious* passages are *publicly retracted*.

I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c.

July 26, 1735

JAMES FOSTER.



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